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Why the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy Will Remain Intergovernmental: a Rationalist Institutional Choice Approach

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published in

Journal of European Public Policy
2003

DOI (link to publisher)

[10.1080/1350176032000101262](https://doi.org/10.1080/1350176032000101262)

document version

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link to publication in VU Research Portal](#)

citation for published version (APA)

Wagner, W. M. (2003). Why the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy Will Remain Intergovernmental: a Rationalist Institutional Choice Approach. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 10(4), 576-595.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1350176032000101262>

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Journal of European Public Policy

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:
<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rjpp20>

Why the EU's common foreign and security policy will remain intergovernmental: a rationalist institutional choice analysis of European crisis management policy

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Version of record first published: 04 Feb 2011.

To cite this article: Wolfgang Wagner (2003): Why the EU's common foreign and security policy will remain intergovernmental: a rationalist institutional choice analysis of European crisis management policy, Journal of European Public Policy, 10:4, 576-595

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1350176032000101262>

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Why the EU's common foreign and security policy will remain intergovernmental: a rationalist institutional choice analysis of European crisis management policy

Wolfgang Wagner

ABSTRACT Critics have suggested communitarizing the European Union's common foreign and security policy in order to increase its effectiveness. Drawing on rationalist theories of regimes and institutional choice, this paper argues that the delegation of competencies to the EU's supranational institutions is unlikely to make European crisis management more effective. Crisis management policy is best understood as a fast co-ordination game in which member states react to international crises under tight time pressure. From this perspective, agreements are self-enforcing and strong institutions are not required. In particular, none of the functions that a delegation of competencies is expected to perform – i.e. formal agenda-setting, monitoring and sanctioning, executing as well as locking-in agreements – plays a pivotal role in crisis management. In contrast, the extension and application of qualified majority voting can speed up decision-making which is the key to a more effective common foreign and security policy.

KEY WORDS Common foreign and security policy; crisis management; delegation; institutional choice; qualified majority voting; rational choice.

1. CRITICISM OF THE CFSP AND PROPOSALS FOR COMMUNITARIZATION

Over the last decade or so, scholars working in a non-rationalist framework or even critical of rationalist theorizing have made important contributions to our understanding of the European Union's (EU's) common foreign and security policy (CFSP). Rationalist scholars tend to regard member state preferences as fixed and stable (or at least are unable to account for changes in preferences or are not interested in doing so). In contrast, scholars working in a constructivist framework have pointed out how the CFSP has, even in the absence of strong supranational institutions, contributed to a convergence of national foreign policies and to a growing sense of a common international identity (cf. Smith 1998, 2000; Glarbo 1999; Jørgensen 1997). Whereas constructivist studies have been illuminating in analysing the effects of international institutions on states' policies and identities, a rationalist framework

of analysis is particularly helpful in explaining states' decisions to establish and maintain international institutions in the first place. In this paper, rationalist theories of co-operation, institutions and institutional choice are therefore used to explain an important feature of European foreign policy co-operation, namely why the CFSP has not been communitarized and is unlikely to become so in the future.

It has become a commonplace in both political and academic debate to criticize the EU's CFSP for its alleged ineffectiveness and its failure to meet the expectations of third countries and European publics. In a famous article, Chris Hill pointed to a 'capability-expectations gap' because 'the Community is not an effective international actor, in terms both of its capacity to produce collective decisions and its impact on events' (Hill 1993: 306). The most frequently cited case in point is the EU's failure to prevent the violent escalation of conflict in the former Yugoslavia. According to another prominent critic, the EU does not suffer from a lack of material resources since an 'EU of nearly 400 million people and a combined gross domestic product (GNP) of more than \$8 trillion that was able to unite its diplomatic and military potential' could easily exert influence on international politics (Gordon 1997: 75). Rather, at the heart of the problem lies the member states' reluctance 'to permit delegation of sovereignty to centralized institutions' (1997: 100) and the resulting failure 'to develop into a unified and effective foreign and security policy actor' (1997: 75). Throughout this article, '(in)effectiveness' refers to the EU's capacity to produce collective decisions rather than to the EU's impact on events because the former is a precondition for the latter and the latter is among the most difficult things to measure.

The intergovernmental character of foreign policy co-operation is frequently made responsible for that failure (cf., for example, Nuttall 1997: 19 and 2000: 35; Pöttering 1990: 342; Rummel 1997: 372). Critics of the CFSP point to the realm of foreign trade where the member states have effectively delegated negotiating power to the European Commission and have thus become a unified and powerful actor in international trade negotiations. By contrast, competencies in European foreign policy-making are still dispersed across a variety of actors including the Commission, the six-monthly Presidency, and, most recently, a High Representative. Moreover, in foreign trade policy, the adjudicative powers of the European Court of Justice (ECJ) guarantee that member states' non-compliance with international trade agreements can be effectively sanctioned. By contrast, non-compliance with the common positions on international events does not elicit any sanctions at all (except a possible loss of reputation).

Building on this diagnosis, it has frequently been suggested communitarizing the CFSP in order to increase its effectiveness.¹ However, the various suggestions do not necessarily share the same understanding of what communitarization actually implies. For example, one of the most contested proposals, the Dutch draft Treaty on European Union of September 1991, listed 'foreign policy' as one chapter in the Treaty establishing the European Community

(TEC). However, important deviations from other issue areas under TEC legislation were suggested. The member states retained their right to submit proposals, the European Parliament (EP) would only be kept 'regularly informed of the fundamental choices' of the CFSP and ECJ competencies were restricted 'to the review of the legality of the application of the procedures for deciding upon the joint action'.² In contrast to this 'light' version of communitarization, the EP asked for foreign policy co-operation to become part of the Community framework, for the delegation of executive tasks to the Commission and for the obligatory consultation of the EP before any common position is adopted.³ Likewise, President of the Commission Romano Prodi holds that Europe 'will not succeed in contributing to peace and stability in the world ... unless ... the entire foreign and security policy of the Union is brought inside the Community system'.⁴ Various politicians have picked up these proposals. Most recently, for example, a resolution of the German Social Democratic Party, largely attributed to Chancellor Schröder, has asked 'to bring this area of policy into the jurisdiction of the European Union'.⁵

My argument that a communitarization of CFSP is unlikely to make it more effective refers to the comprehensive understanding of communitarization that includes the delegation of implementing powers to the Commission and of adjudicative powers to the ECJ. As I will argue below, however, qualified majority voting (QMV), which has also been regarded as a key feature of supranationalism (e.g. Haas 1958: 9), is extremely helpful to make the CFSP more effective.

The remainder of this paper proceeds as follows: in section 2, I will outline a rationalist framework of analysis. Drawing on regime theory, I will discuss the functions that have been attributed to international institutions in order to overcome collective action problems. A central argument in this literature holds that problematic social situations such as collaboration and co-ordination games differ in their combination of collective action problems which in turn impacts on the functions assigned to international institutions. Furthermore, I will draw on the rationalist theory of institutional choice in order to discuss several incentives for states to delegate sovereignty to supranational institutions. In sections 3 and 4, this rationalist framework will be applied to the realm of foreign policy co-operation. Section 3 begins with the presentation of foreign policy co-operation as a co-ordination game in which states have to act under extreme time pressure. From the viewpoint of regime theory, strong institutions are therefore not required to ensure co-operation in foreign affairs. Section 4 adds to this finding by demonstrating that the incentives to delegate sovereignty to supranational institutions hardly apply to the realm of the CFSP. In contrast, the use of QMV is decisive in enhancing the effectiveness of the CFSP.

It should be noted that my argument is based on rationalist, but not necessarily on (neo-)realist, theorizing. According to neorealism,⁶ member states are unlikely to endow supranational institutions with significant powers because they are eager to keep their sovereignty and autonomy. Moreover, states are particularly eager to safeguard their unilateral freedom of action in

the realm of 'high politics', i.e. in the sphere of foreign, security and defence policy. What I would like to demonstrate in this paper is that there are few incentives to delegate sovereignty to supranational institutions even if the protection of sovereignty is not considered to be of high value in its own right.

2. A RATIONALIST FRAMEWORK OF ANALYSIS

2.1 Functional regime theory

Functionalist regime theory has argued that international regimes are created and maintained because they help states to overcome collective action problems (for an overview, see Hasenclever *et al.* 1997: 23–82). International regimes reduce transaction costs and, by providing information, uncertainty. In particular, international institutions help states to overcome the second-order problems of compliance and distribution.⁷

Notwithstanding shared common interests, states may fail to co-operate because they do not want to take the risk of being exploited. Because the international system lacks a central authority that would monitor and sanction defection, co-operative behaviour may be exploited by other states. For example, state A's co-operative policy on arms control may be exploited by state B which defects from a common agreement to limit armament and thereby achieves a military advantage. International institutions may help to overcome the second-order problem of compliance by providing monitoring and sanctioning mechanisms. For example, the nuclear non-proliferation regime includes detailed provisions for monitoring the civilian use of nuclear energy in order to prevent the production of nuclear weapons (cf. Müller 1989). By monitoring compliance, international institutions make it possible for defection to be detected and, as a consequence, provide opportunities for defective behaviour to be dealt with.

Even if the problem of compliance has been overcome (or did not exist in the first place), states may still fail to co-operate because they may fail to agree on the distribution of common gains resulting from co-operation. The second-order problem of distribution arises whenever more than a single co-operative solution is feasible and different solutions bring about different distributions of common gains. As neorealists have emphasized, problems of distribution are exacerbated if states are sensitive to relative gains and losses. From a neorealist perspective, it may be rational for states to forgo absolute gains because 'perhaps a partner will achieve disproportionate gains and, thus strengthened, might some day be a more dangerous enemy than if they had never worked together' (Grieco 1993: 131). The importance of relative gains concerns has been one of the most contested issues between neorealists, on the one hand, and 'neoliberal institutionalists', on the other (for an excellent overview, see Hasenclever *et al.* 1997: 115ff.). Though, of course, no consensus has been reached, scholars have converged around two positions: first, relative gains concerns are of particular importance in the 'high politics' of security

and foreign policy. Second, international institutions may help to overcome problems of distribution because they may provide a framework within which package deals can be struck and side-payments be arranged and, as a consequence, a more balanced distribution of gains be achieved (Hasenclever *et al.* 1997: 123).

Real-world co-operation problems are always likely to consist of some combination of compliance and distribution problems. However, rational choice theory has pointed out that certain types of games correspond to characteristic combinations of second-order problems. Whereas problems of compliance are particularly important in dilemma games, problems of distribution have a dominant position in co-ordination games (cf. Hasenclever *et al.* 1997: 48f.).

For example, negotiations on arms control (which can best be understood as dilemma games) are usually dominated by compliance problems. Without credible provisions for monitoring, states are unlikely to agree on any reduction of their arsenals. Problems of distribution, by contrast, may still have to be tackled (e.g. by finding a balance between various categories of arms that does not leave any state more vulnerable to an attack than before). However, once the second-order problem of compliance has been overcome, negotiations are unlikely to fail because of distributional questions.

By contrast, negotiations on common standards or regulations (which can be understood as a co-ordination game) usually pose distribution problems, but few compliance problems. For example, international air travel necessitates pilots and the flight control centre having a common language in order to communicate. It does not matter which language is chosen but, in order to avoid an air disaster, communication must be ensured (cf. Stein 1983: 130f.). Though all states share a common aversion to air disasters, they may prefer different languages depending on the language skills of their populations. Whatever the substance of the agreement, the benefits of adjustment to a common standard will be distributed unevenly and the costs of adjustments will vary across member states. It is important to note that once the problem of distribution is overcome and an agreement on the substance of co-ordination has been reached, the agreement will be self-enforcing, i.e. no particular mechanisms need to be set up to secure future compliance. In the example taken from Arthur Stein, no state can benefit from defection, i.e. from advising pilots or flight control centres to speak Italian or Greek instead of English. Quite obviously, defection would be self-damaging.

2.2 Institutional choice theory

Because collaboration and co-ordination problems entail different mixtures of second-order problems which in turn may be overcome by different institutional provisions, the specific design of international institutions will depend on the nature of the co-operation problem at stake (Hasenclever *et al.* 1997: 48). In contrast to collaboration games, co-ordination games 'do not require institutions with strong mechanisms for surveillance and enforcement'. Thus,

there is 'little reason to expect that states will choose to devote scarce resources to formal organizations that will be superfluous' (Martin 1993: 101f.).

These findings have been elaborated and specified in the literature on rationalist institutional choice theory or principal-agent analysis (cf. Pollack 1997, 1998, 1999; Moravcsik 1998, 2000). Whereas functionalist regime theory may explain why states choose to co-operate and why they decide to establish and maintain international institutions, institutional choice theory addresses the question of why states choose specific institutional designs such as agencies with independent powers or voting procedures such as QMV. Institutional choice theory starts with the assumption that (international) agreements are inherently incomplete because it would bring about immense costs to lay down all the details of an agreement including their correct application and interpretation. At the same time, the requirement to have member states negotiate about details by consensus could easily block decisions and render the agreement ineffective. Essentially, institutional choice theory suggests two possible solutions to the problem of incomplete contracting, namely the pooling and delegating of sovereignty: 'Sovereignty is *pooled* when governments agree to decide future matters by voting procedures other than unanimity ... Sovereignty is *delegated* when supranational actors are permitted to take certain autonomous decisions, without an intervening vote or unilateral veto' (Moravcsik 1998: 67; original emphasis). By easing future decision-making, both the pooling and delegating of sovereignty serve to enhance the credibility of member states' commitments (Moravcsik 1998: 73f.). The pooling of sovereignty ensures that single member states become unable to veto secondary decisions and thereby block the implementation of the original agreement. In contrast, the delegation of sovereignty may enhance the credibility of the original commitment by a) securing the future supply of initiatives, b) providing reliable monitoring, and c) reliably executing an agreement.⁸ Moreover, the delegation of sovereignty locks in policies in the face of future uncertainty.

As regards the future supply of initiatives, states face incentives to delegate the power of formal agenda-setting or initiatives to an independent agency, such as the European Commission. Because initiatives are costly, a rational utility-maximizer may choose to leave the initiative to others even if this strategy implies the risk of failed agreement (Gehring 1994: 231f.).⁹ If proposals are decided upon by (qualified) majority, there are even incentives to grant the Commission a monopoly of taking initiatives because the majoritarian system encourages 'an endless series of proposals from disgruntled legislators who had been in the minority in a previous vote' (Pollack 1997: 104).

Second, states may delegate sovereignty in order to make future monitoring of compliance more credible. Because monitoring is costly, states have incentives to free-ride, i.e. not to participate in monitoring activities and to leave them to other states. Therefore, monitoring tasks may be delegated to international institutions. For example, the monitoring of the civilian use of nuclear energy is delegated to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). In addition to overcoming the problem of free-riding on monitoring, the

delegation of monitoring to a technical international agency may increase the acceptance of inspections, which is of particular importance in the realm of armaments and security. However, since monitoring compliance as well as sanctioning defection also entail costs and states may tend to free-ride, delegating monitoring powers is more credible than pooling them. The nuclear non-proliferation regime has already been quoted as an example. However, sanctioning a state's defection may be costly too, and states have again incentives to free-ride on other states' sanctioning efforts. Thus, there are also incentives to delegate sanctioning to international institutions. The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, for example, holds that the United Nations Security Council may deal with infringements of the treaty. More effective sanctioning provisions can be found within the European Community's common market: the European Commission as well as any member state may bring an action against any member state suspected of not having properly implemented Community legislation. If the ECJ finds that Community legislation is indeed infringed, the Court may impose penalties on the respective member state.

Finally, the future execution of agreements can be made credible by delegating this task to an independent agency. Here, the creation of the European Central Bank may serve as an example: first, all members of the European monetary union committed themselves to the aim of monetary stability. Given that capital has become highly mobile and that financial markets consider governments as prone to endorse spending programmes at the risk of higher inflation, the creation of an independent bank with the mandate to ensure monetary stability made the original commitment credible (cf. Sandholtz 1993).

Rationalist institutional choice theory usually pictures states as unitary actors who use international institutions as a means to improve the effectiveness of common policies. By distinguishing between the government, on the one hand, and various societal groups, on the other hand, Andrew Moravcsik has added a liberal dimension to this argument.¹⁰ From this perspective, governments may use international institutions as a 'means of "locking in" particular preferred ... policies ... in the face of future political uncertainty' (Moravcsik 2000: 226). Because the delegation of sovereignty to international institutions ties the hands of future governments, a favoured policy can gain additional credibility. To use Moravcsik's example, democratic governments may create human rights regimes 'to lock in and consolidate democratic institutions, thereby enhancing their credibility and stability *vis-à-vis* non-democratic political threats' (Moravcsik 2000: 220). However, governments are expected to carefully weigh these benefits of reducing political uncertainty against the sovereignty costs that delegation brings about.

3. FOREIGN POLICY CO-OPERATION AS A (FAST) CO-ORDINATION GAME

In order to explain the institutional design of the CFSP, we have to look at the nature of the co-operation problem at stake as well as the possible functions

that a delegation of power can be expected to perform in that area. From a rationalist perspective,¹¹ the CFSP is best understood as an international regime designed to realize common gains from co-operation.¹² Indeed, many scholars have pictured the CFSP as an instrument for member states to increase their influence on the world stage: 'A strong European role in the regional and international system is something like a "common good" from which each member state profits if it produces results in the interest of every state of the EC/EU' (Regelsberger *et al.* 1997: 4; see also De La Serre 1989: 245; Gordon 1997: 80; Zielonka 1998: 62). Though every member state, particularly the larger ones, may influence the international environment on its own, there are 'politics of scale' (Ginsberg 1989) which make the collectivity of member states more influential than all individual foreign policies together. The policy towards the former Yugoslavia may again serve as an illustration: in late 1991, Germany defected from a common EU policy on recognizing the Yugoslav successor states on the condition that minorities are granted autonomy with respect to local government, law enforcement, and education (cf. Crawford 1996). As a consequence, the 'carrot' of recognition was largely invalidated and the EU's leverage over the successor states' policies on minority rights dramatically decreased. In contrast, when ethnic conflict broke out again in Macedonia in 2001, no member state unilaterally defected from the common positions agreed in the Council. Although the successful prevention of another civil war in Macedonia may not be credited exclusively to this European unity, it has almost certainly contributed to the effectiveness of Europe's crisis management.

In contrast to other conceptualizations (e.g. the CFSP as an 'actor' (Bretherton and Vogler 1999) or as a 'system of foreign relations' (Hill 1993: 322) etc.), the regime concept highlights that foreign policy co-operation is a 'problematic social situation' (Zürn 1992: 153ff.) – or a 'mixed motive game': though the member states share a common interest (namely to influence international affairs), they may still fail to co-operate because they may not overcome problems of compliance and distribution.

As I will argue in this section, the key to understanding the institutional design of the CFSP is that it has been dominated by crisis management and that, as a consequence, co-ordination, not collaboration, has been the most important collective action problem at stake. Furthermore, crisis management is characterized by great time pressure because common positions almost always have to be taken and adjusted within a very short time. For example, in 2001, the EU had to decide within days whether it considered the policy of the Albanian minority in Macedonia legitimate in order to have an impact on the course of the crisis. This time pressure is strikingly different from the lengthy negotiations on common standards or regulations that usually serve as an example of co-ordination games (cf. above). In the realm of foreign policy, 'action has to be decided quickly according to specific situations, not by a long deliberation for systematic cases' (Regelsberger and Wessels 1996: 31). In order to highlight this difference, I will refer to the CFSP as a 'fast co-ordination

game'. As will be pointed out in more detail below, the nature of crisis management as a 'fast co-ordination game' explains why there are few incentives for delegating sovereignty to supranational institutions, and thus why the EU's CFSP has not been communitarized and why it is unlikely to become so in the future.

It is important to note that the CFSP has not been limited to crisis management and that some of the issues dealt with within the framework of the CFSP correspond to collaboration games. An important case in point are economic sanctions which are characterized by collaboration problems because individual member states may achieve economic gains by defecting from co-operation (cf. Martin 1992). More recently, the EU's effort to set up a European Rapid Reaction Force is also best understood as a collaboration problem because, again, individual member states have incentives to free-ride, i.e. to have other member states bear the burden of increased defence spending. But notwithstanding these important issues in European foreign policy, the most common activity under the CFSP has been to address international crises abroad, i.e. between or within third states. Whenever international conflicts arise, the foreign ministers are expected to issue a joint statement and to voice a common position.¹³ Any common position in turn entails varying degrees of support or criticism of the parties involved. Since many member states have traditional national positions on long-standing conflicts as well as established patterns of support for various foreign countries, domestic movements and the like, different preferences over the content of common positions are likely to emerge. Examples abound: when tensions between Yugoslav federal authorities and the republics of Slovenia and Croatia increased, most EU member states preferred the preservation of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, whereas Germany pushed for a recognition of Slovenia and Croatia. With a view to the Middle East, all EU member states share an interest in a peaceful settlement, though Germany tends to have greater sympathies for Israel's concerns, whereas France has had stronger ties with the Palestinians. In all these examples, unilateral foreign policies were ineffective at best and counterproductive at worst. In contrast, only a common European policy provides the Europeans with a chance to influence the course of events, as the policy towards Macedonia has illustrated (though common positions on the Middle East demonstrate that even common policies are not necessarily successful). Once such a common position has been reached, it is self-enforcing in the sense that unilateral defection does not bring about additional benefits at the expense of the other member states. As long as a consensus on the principles of a common policy holds, unilateral defection would be self-damaging because it undermines the effectiveness of the common policy without creating a viable alternative.

A further important feature of foreign policy co-operation is the time pressure under which common positions are taken (see also Regelsberger and Wessels 1996: 31). Despite all efforts to establish early warning systems, international crises are typically put on the agenda of the General Affairs

Council at rather short notice. Moreover, the effectiveness of common policies very much depends on a swift response. Just as sudden crises appear on foreign ministers' agendas, they may develop in an unexpected way which makes rapid adjustment necessary. This extraordinary time pressure distinguishes foreign policy from many other issue areas.

In sum, two features are characteristic of crisis management, which lies at the heart of the CFSP. First, crisis management is a co-ordination game in which member states share a common interest in a joint reaction to international events but may at the same time prefer different contents of a common position. Second, foreign policy co-operation is a fast game, i.e. foreign ministers have to negotiate over common positions under immense time pressure.

4. WHY THE CFSP IS LIKELY TO REMAIN INTERGOVERNMENTAL

The CFSP is likely to remain intergovernmental because the dominant features of its most common task, crisis management, bring about little demand for supranational institutions. Put in the vocabulary of institutional choice theory, there are few incentives to delegate sovereignty to supranational institutions such as the Commission or the ECJ.

I will first demonstrate that, in the realm of crisis management, there is little need for the various functions that a delegation of sovereignty can perform. Though some incentives to delegate powers to the European Commission certainly exist, they are far less salient than the ideal types identified by rationalist institutional choice theory (see below, section 4.1). However, I will argue that QMV does enhance the effectiveness of the CFSP (see below, section 4.2).

4.1 Lacking incentives for delegating sovereignty

Rationalist institutional choice analysis has identified several functions which the delegation of sovereignty may be expected to perform, namely formal agenda-setting, monitoring, executing agreements and, from a liberal perspective, 'locking-in' agreements. As I will argue in this section, none of these functions plays a pivotal role in crisis management.

Formal agenda-setting

Crisis management certainly does not differ from other policy areas in that initiatives are costly and member states are prone to free-ride. However, crisis management is most frequently triggered by external demand, i.e. by third parties asking for support (cf. Schmitter 1969). Thus, even without delegated agenda-setting powers, foreign ministers' agendas are likely to include salient issues of common concern.¹⁴ There are even fewer incentives to endow the Commission with an exclusive right to initiate policy. Institutional choice

theory holds that an *exclusive* right of initiative is designed to avoid endless series of proposals from those outvoted before. However, there has been little majority voting in the realm of the CFSP.¹⁵ What is more, since crisis management is directed at moving targets, policy has to be continuously realigned and adapted anyway. As a consequence, participants have few incentives to renegotiate yesterday's position.

Monitoring and sanctioning

There are few incentives to delegate monitoring powers because crisis management is a co-ordination game rather than a collaboration game and agreements are therefore self-enforcing. Even if defection should occur, it would not increase the effectiveness or credibility of the CFSP, if the ECJ was endowed with the power to adjudicate or even sanction. The major reason is that adjudication takes time, whereas foreign ministers have to react quickly to international events. Thus, it would hardly enhance the effectiveness of a common policy, if, for example, the ECJ had concluded in 1993 that the unilateral recognition of Slovenia and Croatia by Germany was not in line with the common position of the then Twelve. The German decision was immediately carried out and could not be annulled. If, by contrast, Germany was censured for paying too much subsidy to a given plant, competition could be restored (and member states' commitments to competition increased) if the subsidies had to be paid back.

Executive powers

As already pointed out above, there are few incentives to delegate executive powers because crisis management is a co-ordination rather than a collaboration game. Because member states cannot achieve additional gains by defecting from co-operation, an agreement will be self-enforcing. As long as member states' diplomatic statements concur along the same lines, it does not undermine the 'politics of scale' if the execution of common foreign policy is left to fifteen states. Thus, the credibility of member states' commitments can hardly be enhanced by delegating executive powers to the Commission.

However, though delegating executive powers to the Commission cannot enhance the credibility of a common foreign policy, it may improve the *coherence* of EU external relations, it may increase the *visibility* of a common policy and may thus, in an indirect way, even enhance its effectiveness. Lacking coherence has indeed been a major criticism of EU external relations since responsibilities for diplomacy, trade and aid are distributed across various institutions and frequently follow different goals.¹⁶ Problems of coherence have appeared the more the CFSP has gone beyond statements to common actions.¹⁷ Decisions with administrative or financial implications have proved difficult to carry out on an intergovernmental basis (cf. Schmalz 1998). Thus, the use of Community directives (in the case of sanctions) and the Community budget

(e.g. in the case of observer missions) has increased the effectiveness of the CFSP. At the same time, this has raised questions of primary responsibility and coherence. Therefore, the delegation of executive powers to the Commission would certainly increase the coherence of EU external relations. It is important to note, however, that this incentive is subordinate in the sense that it does not concern the effectiveness of the CFSP per se but the effectiveness of EU external relations in their entirety.

Furthermore, there are incentives to delegate the *representation* of the EU's CFSP in order to enhance its visibility, i.e. to give Europe's foreign policy 'a face'. Indeed, in 1997, the member states agreed to assign the function of a 'high representative' to the Council's Secretary General. Moreover, special representatives have been appointed for various regions such as the Middle East and Macedonia. Besides increasing visibility, the delegation of representative powers has contributed to the continuity of EU policies.

Finally, there are incentives to delegate the financial administration of foreign policy to the Commission and to charge joint actions on the Community budget. As the record of financing joint actions has demonstrated, the funding of the CFSP by the member states outside the Community budget has proved to be cumbersome and ineffective.¹⁸ As a consequence, the member states agreed to charge operational expenditure in the CFSP on the Community budget to ensure effective funding.

'Locking-in' agreements

The CFSP is indeed said to have an 'alibi and legitimization function' (Rummel and Wessels 1983: 40), i.e. the policy may serve as a pretext for maintaining specific policies. Critics can be isolated with reference to an existing 'European consensus'; policies can be legitimized with reference to 'European standards'. It should be noted that this alibi function 'works as regards third countries but also internally *vis-à-vis* political forces and public opinion' (Rummel and Wessels 1983: 40; De La Serre 1989: 246). However, public pressure on decision-makers is generally weaker in foreign affairs than in a range of domestic issues, such as economic and social policies. As a consequence, in the CFSP, incentives to delegate sovereignty to international institutions are fewer than, for example, in monetary policy. Moreover, agreements are difficult to 'lock in' because the changing international environment requires capacities for swift adaptations and policy changes.

In sum, the CFSP can certainly benefit from a transfer of competencies to the supranational Commission. It is important to note, however, that the CFSP's most salient activity, crisis management, benefits little from those functions that a delegation of sovereignty can be expected to perform. The effectiveness of the CFSP may only be enhanced indirectly, mainly by improving the visibility and coherence of the EU's external relations. In contrast, the most important benefits that institutional choice theory attributes to the delegation of sovereignty, for example in competition policy, cannot be

realized in the CFSP. Because foreign policy co-operation is frequently triggered by external demand and agreements are essentially self-enforcing, there are few incentives to delegate powers of agenda-setting and monitoring.

4.2 QMV as a key to an effective CFSP

As pointed out above, the delegation of powers to supranational institutions can enhance the CFSP's effectiveness only marginally. In contrast, the effectiveness of EU crisis management significantly depends on the decision-making rules in the Council. Because crisis management takes place under great time pressure, the effectiveness of the CFSP depends on the foreign ministers' capability to adapt common policies swiftly to changes in the international system. As the record in the EU's first pillar shows, the introduction of QMV significantly increases the speed of decision-making (Schulz and König 2000; Golub 1999). Therefore, from the rationalist perspective adopted here, QMV is the most important institutional determinant of the CFSP's effectiveness (see also Regelsberger and Wessels 1996: 54). The introduction and extension of QMV during the 1990s can thus be explained by the member states' efforts to increase the effectiveness of EU crisis management in the face of recurring crises in the Balkans. However, the infrequent use of QMV by the foreign ministers points to only a half-hearted commitment to making the CFSP more effective.

It should be noted that the introduction of QMV does not necessarily mean that states call for a vote as soon as they consider themselves in a majority coalition and that minorities are simply outvoted. Rather, the possibility of a formal vote urges all participants to search for consensus. At the level of the Political Committee¹⁹ and the working groups, delegations must receive broader instructions from their ministries because QMV makes it no longer possible to simply oppose any proposal that does not correspond to a given mandate. As a result, few formal votes are taken and most of the business is settled with the Presidency stating a consensus (Teasdale 1996: 105f.).

In response to growing demands for effective European crisis management, the Maastricht Treaty introduced QMV to the CFSP. Some member states, however, were not aiming for a more effective European crisis management policy and therefore opposed the introduction of QMV. The compromise found in Maastricht stipulates that member states may define unanimously those matters on which decisions are to be taken by a qualified majority (art. J.3, para. 2). However, that provision was hardly ever applied (Ginsberg 1997: 21) not least because the British government blocked any attempt to use the possibility of majority voting (Regelsberger and Wessels 1996: 35). The Amsterdam Treaty confirms the principle of unanimous decision-making. However, the Council is supposed to act by qualified majority 'when adopting joint actions, common positions or taking any other decision on the basis of a common strategy' (art. 23, para. 2).²⁰ At the same time, however, any member state may block the taking of a vote 'for important and stated reasons

of national policy' (art. 23, para. 3). As a consequence, the practice of voting in the Council very much depends on the balance of these principles and therefore on the willingness of member states to refrain from blocking consensus. As a first review of decision-making behaviour in the Council indicates, the provisions on QMV have by and large remained a 'dead letter' (Regelsberger 2002: 239) even though the German Presidency in 1999 managed to speed up decision-making by mentioning the possibility of calling a vote (Regelsberger 2000: 239). This reluctance to apply QMV may therefore account for the remaining ineffectiveness in EU crisis management.

5. CONCLUSION

The EU's difficulties in coping with violent conflict in the former Yugoslavia triggered an extensive debate about a reform of the CFSP that eventually led to a series of modest institutional reforms. These reforms have left the CFSP as essentially intergovernmental, though the Commission is involved at the fringes and QMV has been introduced. From the perspective adopted in this paper, this intergovernmental status quo now forms a plateau which is likely to remain stable because it is enough to translate common interests in crisis management into effective policy. Put differently, no further institutional reforms involving delegation of power to the supranational institutions are required to ensure an effective European foreign policy. Since there are strong incentives to speed up decision-making by resorting to QMV, the application of the respective provisions will suffice instead.

Three final points remain to be addressed: first, the institutional status quo does not guarantee successful European crisis management. Whenever member states disagree about appropriate policy or tend to side with different parties in a conflict, no effective common policy is likely to emerge. It would be misleading, however, to blame such policy failure on the intergovernmental set-up of the CFSP. Without a sufficient degree of consensus among the member states, a common foreign policy will be lacking simply because it is not *desired* by the member states.

This leads to a second issue, namely whether the EU should be able to pursue an effective foreign policy even against the opposition of individual member states. The answer to this question is closely connected to whether one endorses the vision of a European federation whose legitimacy outbids that of individual member states, or whether one regards the EU as a system of governance whose legitimacy is derived from the member states. From a federalist perspective, a communitarization of the CFSP appears desirable because it contributes to a federalization of Europe. In contrast, the rationalist perspective adopted here is biased towards the latter point of view. It regards the member states as the principals in European foreign policy who will delegate decision-making power not because they are striving for a European federation but only if and when delegation helps them to realize their interests.

Finally, the argument presented here depends on the notion that crisis

management constitutes the most salient activity in the CFSP. Though crisis management has certainly been pivotal in the CFSP, recent developments in crisis prevention policy, on the one hand, and military policy, on the other hand, may change the nature of European foreign policy. Both crisis prevention and military policy benefit from delegating power to the supranational institutions to a greater extent than crisis management policy. Thus, the European security and defence policy (ESDP) in particular may, in the long run, contribute to a communitarization of the CFSP.

As pointed out above, the rationalist perspective does not answer whether member states' preferences over substantial foreign policy are likely to converge or diverge, i.e. whether the precondition for any effective common policy is likely to be met in the future. Whereas the rationalist perspective remains limited to an analysis of an institution's regulatory effects on a state's behaviour, a constructivist perspective is better suited to an examination of an institution's influence on a state's interests and identity in the first place. Here, the available evidence suggests that member states' preferences are likely to further converge rather than diverge in the future. From a constructivist perspective (cf. Smith 2000; Tonra 1997; Glarbo 1999), the recurrent interaction among foreign ministers has fostered a '*communauté des vues*'. Moreover, once common positions have been agreed on, member states usually stick to that common position. Taken together, there is a growing *acquis politique* to which member states concur.

What a rationalist institutional choice perspective *can* add to that picture is that the temporary institutions of the CFSP can translate that growing *acquis politique* into an effective crisis management policy.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank Andreas Hasenclever, Dirk Peters and two anonymous referees for helpful comments and suggestions on a previous version of the paper.

NOTES

- 1 During the negotiations on the Maastricht Treaty, the European Parliament asked for a communitarization of the CFSP and was supported by the Italian Chamber of Deputies and by the Dutch government (cf. Nuttall 2000: 105; Corbett 1993: 35). Several years later, during the negotiations on a reform of the Maastricht Treaty, a communitarization of the CFSP was demanded by the German and the Belgian governments. In 2002, the European Convention set up a working group on 'external action' to study whether an extension of the 'community method' could overcome inertia in the CFSP (cf. mandate of working group VII 'external

- action', CONV 252/02 of 10 September 2002; <http://register.consilium.eu.int/pdf/en/02/cv00/00252en2.pdf>).
- 2 Dutch Presidency Draft Treaty 'Towards European Union', reprinted in Corbett 1993: 329–40, quotes taken from page 335.
- 3 Cf. Resolution on the functioning of the Treaty on European Union with a view to the 1996 Intergovernmental Conference of 17 May 1995 (A4–0101/95; OJ C 151 of June 19 1995).
- 4 'An enlarged and more united Europe, a global player – challenges and opportunities in the new century'. Speech by Romano Prodi, President of the European Commission, to the College of Europe, Bruges, 12 November 2001.
- 5 'Responsibility for Europe'. Resolution adopted at the national conference of the Social Democratic Party of Germany, Nuremberg, 19–22 November 2001, <http://www.spd.de/english/>, December 2001.
- 6 Neorealism is a moving target itself (cf. Legro and Moravcsik 1999). Over the last few years, Waltz's scepticism towards international institutions has been challenged by 'post-classical' or 'modified' neorealists who argue that states may use international institutions to enhance their influence over other states (cf. Schweller and Pries 1997; Brooks 1997; Grieco 1995). However, even modified neorealists attribute a high value to autonomy and independence. As a consequence, states are only expected to strengthen international institutions if a substantial gain in influence may be expected that outweighs the expected loss in autonomy (Baumann *et al.* 2001).
- 7 Compliance and distribution are termed second-order problems because actors do not aim to solve them for their own sake but as a precondition to solving first-order co-operation problems which are addressed for their own sake (cf. Zangl 1999: 68).
- 8 Pollack (1997: 103f.) lists four functions of delegation, three of which are largely identical with the ones spelled out above. Whereas Pollack lists the solving of incomplete contracting problems as a function in its own right, I understand it as comprehensive of the other three functions.
- 9 Neofunctionalists have also pointed out that initiatives by the Commission have the advantage of being 'neutral' in terms of the distribution of costs and benefits (Haas 1968: 524; Tranholm-Mikkelsen 1991: 6).
- 10 According to Moravcsik, '[l]iberal international relations theory focuses on state behaviour driven by variation in the economic interests and conceptions of public goods provision on the part of societal groups, as well as by the nature of domestic political institutions' (Moravcsik 2000: 225; see also Moravcsik 1997).
- 11 It should be noted that there is certainly more than a single rationalist perspective. The perspective taken in this paper builds on neoliberal institutionalism (e.g. Keohane 1983, 1984), rational choice theory (e.g. Axelrod and Keohane 1985; Zürn 1992; Zangl 1999) and a rationalist theory of institutional choice (Pollack 1997; Moravcsik 1998). It does not draw on the neorealist argument that member states are unlikely to compromise their sovereignty in the field of high politics.
- 12 The CFSP is usually not pictured as an international regime, but see Schneider and Seybold 1997: 368; Smith 1998: 322; Axt 1993.
- 13 In an early article published before the inception of European political co-operation, Philippe Schmitter expected a spillover from economic integration into the realm of foreign policy because European economic integration would create externalities for third states, which are then expected to address their demands to the Community, which in turn is expected to foster foreign policy co-operation (see the 'externalization hypothesis' in Schmitter (1969)).
- 14 However, this does not hold true for crisis prevention policy since preventive measures, by definition, should be taken before a conflict is put on the international

- agenda. This may explain why member states have agreed to establish an early warning unit in the Council Secretariat.
- 15 Although the possibility of QMV on implementing decisions was introduced with the Maastricht Treaty which came into force in November 1993, only one instance of actual voting by QMV has been reported, namely with regard to land-mines (Burghardt and Tebbe 1995: 15). The Treaty of Amsterdam allowed for QMV on common positions on the basis of common strategies but no vote has yet taken place. Apparently, however, the German Presidency in 1999 was successful in easing discussion by pointing to the possibility of QMV (Regelsberger 2000: 239).
 - 16 It should be noted, however, that lack of coherence in external relations occurs in other political systems as well. Competencies may be dispersed among different ministries, among President and Prime Minister (as in France), and among different parties of a governing coalition (as in Germany).
 - 17 The instrument of a 'common action' has been introduced with the Maastricht Treaty. The dividing line between common positions and common actions, however, has been blurred: common positions frequently have executive implications (e.g. sanctions against South Africa) whereas some common actions remain without executive implications.
 - 18 The most striking example has been the financing of humanitarian aid to Bosnia-Herzegovina which was agreed in a joint action of November 1993. The measure was designed to help the population survive the cold winter. The member states had decided to provide the necessary budget themselves but could not agree on their financial shares until May 1994, i.e. when the winter was already over. Moreover, only a minority of member states had actually delivered their payments by October 1994 (cf. Monar 1997: 61f.). From a rational choice perspective, this is a classic example of states failing to effectively co-operate despite substantial agreement because the second-order problem of distribution has not been overcome.
 - 19 Owing to the launch of an ESDP, the Treaty of Nice replaced the Political Committee consisting of the Political Directors with a Political and Security Committee consisting of Permanent Representatives at ambassadorial level.
 - 20 The 'Nice Treaty' has extended QMV to the appointment of the High Representative and Special Representatives.

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Final version accepted for publication 18/2/03